

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a red patterned dress, is smiling and holding a glass of white wine. She is standing on a sandy beach with the ocean and a blue sky with white clouds in the background. The text "Willie Russell's SHIRLEY VALENTINE" is overlaid on the top right of the image.

Willie Russell's
**SHIRLEY
VALENTINE**

**Starring
Norma Sheahan**

CTD City Theatre Dublin
In association with The Gaiety Theatre and Mullingar
Centre For The Performing Arts
Present

Shirley - Norma Sheahan

Directed By Michael Scott

Setting Designed By Michael McCaffery

Setting Constructed by

Sean Lynch & Jacek Kowalczyk

Stage Manager Michael Gilmartin

Technical Stage Manager Josh Griffin

Assistant Stage Manager Calum Bruce

Music Composed Michael Scott

Lighting Design Michael Scott

For The Gaiety Theatre

General Manager Rebecca Farrell

Technical Director Nic Ree

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GAIETY THEATRE

Opening on 27th November 1871, with a double bill of Goldsmith's evergreen comedy *She Stoops to Conquer*, followed by the tuneful burlesque *La Belle Sauvage*, to a packed audience, the Gaiety Theatre staked its claim as the foremost entertainment venue in Ireland. To this present day, the Gaiety continues to work with the highest level of Irish producers, actors and directors, as well as internationally renowned productions and continues to excel in creating an outstanding theatre experience.

As Dublin's longest established theatre in continuous production, the Gaiety Theatre triumphantly maintains its unrivalled presence as the city's premier venue for theatrical performances, including opera, comedy, ballet, dance and drama to name but a few. Inspiration for the theatre struck the Gunn brothers, John and Michael, whose background was a family music business on Grafton Street. Before long they engaged the architect C.J. Phipps, whose original design has given us the essential Gaiety, with its handsome Venetian façade. After twelve years of marked success, the most distinguished theatre architect of the day, Frank Matcham, was brought in to create the commodious parterre and dress-circle bars in the extension to the west of the auditorium, which he then redecorated giving the Gaiety its charming baroque interior.

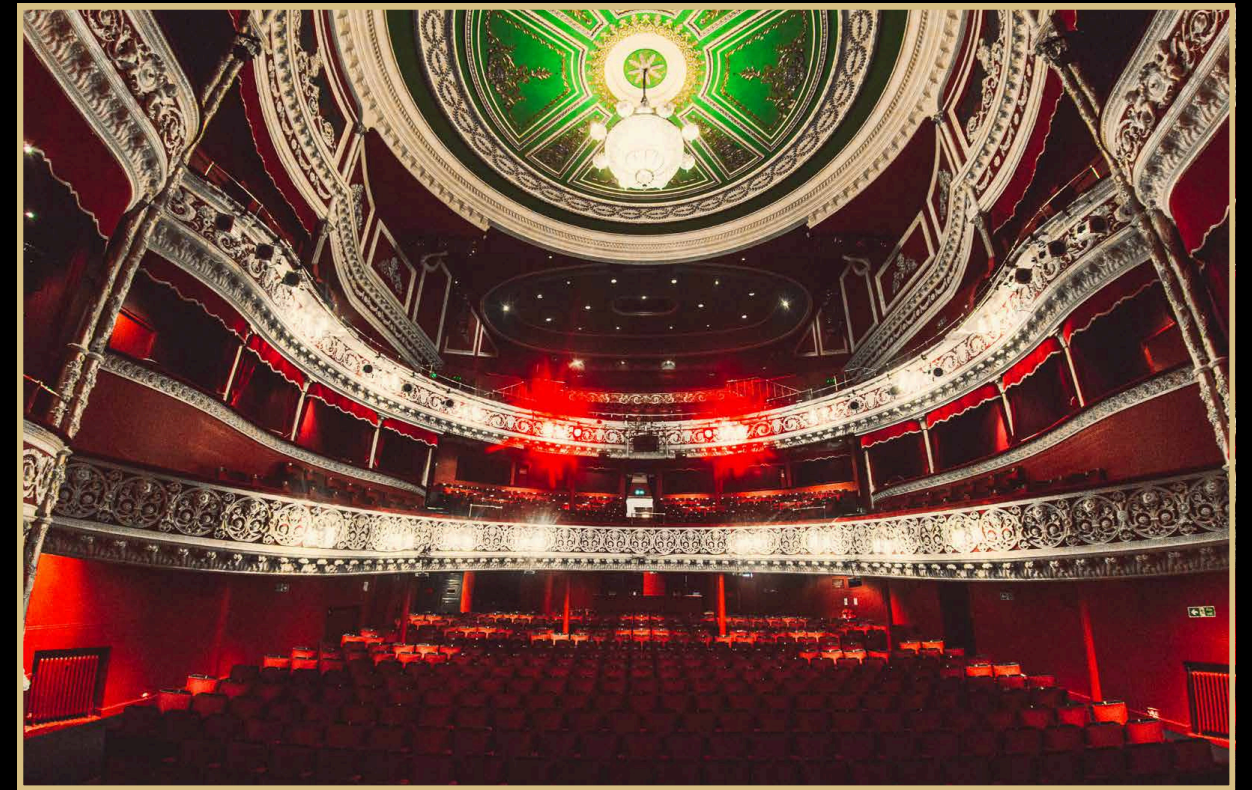
Although Phipps's theatre had three balconies, in 1955 the Louis Elliman Group removed the steep top gallery - known as 'The Gods' - for safety reasons and had the centre balcony extended backwards to create the present Grand and Upper Circles. It was also 'Mr Louis' who instituted the home-produced - as distinct from imported - Christmas pantomimes. He engaged O'D Productions - the comedy writer Barry O'Donovan and his professional partner, the incomparable comedian Jimmy O'Dea - to present the panto, and also the annual summer variety show. The Gaiety Theatre continues with this tradition and produces its home-grown Gaiety Panto every Christmas to this day.

O'Dea was later joined by the young Maureen Potter, who quickly established herself as 'Ireland's Queen of Comedy'. To generations of Dubliners the name 'Gaiety' was synonymous with the sparkle, the fun, the magic and, yes, the Gaiety of their performances.

It was during the Eamonn Andrews era that the Gaiety Theatre's audience swelled on one famous night to 400 million for the 1971 Eurovision Song Contest - the first to be held in Ireland, and RTE's earliest colour transmission of an indoor event. The Gaiety Theatre's stunning interior received much praise from around the world. Andrews also oversaw the rebuilding of the backstage area and levelling of the old 'raked' stage with the installation of a modern counterweight system for flying scenery in 1984.

'If stones could speak', the sturdy walls of the Gaiety Theatre would be excused for indulging in a lengthy monologue of name-dropping, for the house has witnessed the comings and goings of more famous figures and faces of the dramatic stage than any building in this country. In ballet, Pavlova, Krassovska, Markova and Dolin; in opera, Salvini, Pavarotti, Joan Sutherland and, in our own time, Veronica Dunne and Bernadette Greevy; among the stars of variety, Jack Benny, Noel Purcell, Bing Cosby, Ray Charles, and Julie Andrews; among the great actors, Edwin Booth, Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Sara Bernhardt, Sybil Thorndyke, Siobhan McKenna, Peter O'Toole, Ray McNally, Michael Gambon, Anna Manahan, John Hurt, Cillian Murphy, Gabriel Byrne, Brendan Gleeson, Stephen Rea, Vanessa Redgrave, Rupert Everett, Rosaleen Lenihan, Frank Kelly, Des Keogh, Fionnula Flanagan and Paul Mescal; and finally comedians Brendan Grace, Joan Rivers and Billy Connolly to name but a few. In addition, for over 20 years, The Gaiety has been home to the wonderful Riverdance show, where they return to perform to jam-packed houses, thrilling our international guests and home-grown audiences with this iconic production every summer.

Maureen Potter - who was the smiling face of the Gaiety Theatre to thousands of Dubliners - said that "The Gaiety Theatre is the most aptly named place I know." Cyril Cusack once referred to "the fair balance of tragedy and comedy, of merriment and wisdom, and not without a proper ingredient of controversy." In his autobiography, Mícheál MacLiammóir wrote of the Gaiety Theatre as "a place of breadth and dignity" and Milo O'Shea has written that "Dublin without the Gaiety Theatre would be a city bereft of an important element of glamour and excitement."



Having performed in the Gaiety as a young actor in *Borstal Boy* alongside Niall Toibín, Gabriel Byrne made an epic return to the Gaiety stage in January 2022 with a sell-out world premiere of *Walking with Ghosts*, referring to his time in the Gaiety Theatre as a "homecoming". Should you wish to see some of our long history, the stairwells, bars and corridors display our vivid history through programmes and photographs from various shows dating all the way back to the early 1900's.

In the Spring of 1999, the Gaiety was purchased from Break for the Border Group by Caroline Downey and Denis Desmond. The new owners added the Gaiety to their portfolio of other theatres and venues, having purchased Dublin's Olympia Theatre in 1995. In addition, they have interests in a number of venues in London, Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Brighton and Oxford. The Gaiety has undergone an extensive conservation programme instituted by these present owners.

In 2007, €7.5 million was granted to the Theatre by the Minister of Arts, Sport and Tourism, Minister John O'Donoghue TD. At the time, Dublin lacked an adequate opera venue that could accommodate flying scenery and a full orchestra. These funds allowed for a complete rebuild of the stage including the enlargement of orchestra pit and stage and the addition of scenery flying accommodation and therefore being a home for Opera in Dublin city centre.

Since its purchase in 1999, the current owners have also invested €12 million into the Theatre. The works include an air conditioning system, improved seating with increased legroom, fire upgrades throughout the premises, dressing room upgrades, roof works, refurbishment of Front of House, bathrooms, bar areas, Waterford Crystal chandeliers and installing a new canopy. The fruits of these works enable the theatre to programme a wider repertoire of productions enhancing the cultural life of the city as well as ensuring the future of the Gaiety Theatre and bringing her back to her former glory.

Gaiety Productions produces work from incredible playwrights, such as John B. Keane, Brendan Behan and Martin McDonagh. The past few years have seen large scale productions of the *Cripple of Inishmaan*, *The Lonesome West*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *Hangmen and Sive*, and in 2026 presented the Irish premiere of Jez Butterworth's Tony-award winning and Olivier-award winning drama, *The Ferryman*.

In 2026, Gaiety Productions was proud to stage *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. Widely regarded as a landmark of modern theatre, the play remains as relevant today as when it was first published in 1953.

The Gaiety works with the highest level of Irish directors and actors, as well as hosting internationally renowned productions. The Gaiety Theatre continues to take great pride in bringing to the stage the best of Irish and international talent and will continue to ensure that Irish theatre will prosper for generations to come.

Willy Russell

Willy Russell's career spans more than four decades; born in Liverpool in 1947, he left school at 15, became a women's hairdresser, part-time singer/songwriter before returning to education and becoming a teacher.

Russell's breakthrough work, commissioned by Liverpool Everyman, "John Paul George Ringo...and Bert" transferred to the West End winning Best Musical - Evening Standard and London Theatre Critics Awards.

Two of Willy's best-known plays have female protagonists, "Educating Rita" (Olivier Award for Best Comedy and "Shirley Valentine" (Olivier Award - Best New Comedy & Best New Actress, Tony Awards, Broadway – Best Actress). Both became successful films - Julie Walters and Pauline Collins who played the roles on stage received Oscar nominations as did Willy Russell for the screenplay of Educating Rita.

"Blood Brothers," (Laurence Olivier Award, Best New Musical, 1983), played for 24 years becoming the 3rd longest running West End musical. Major foreign productions include a 2 year run on B

productions in South Africa and Korea and current productions in Australia and Japan. The UK tour is still playing to packed houses.

"Our Day Out," originally written for TV, about a school outing, has been adapted for the stage as "Our Day Out - The Musical". Premiered at Liverpool's Royal Court in 2010 to rave reviews it was revived a year later for another sell out season.

The critically acclaimed novel, "The Wrong Boy" was published in 2000 and translated worldwide. For the last few years, Willy has been working on painting, developing his ideas and experimenting with line, colour and form. During 2017 Willy's artwork was exhibited for the first time; "Another Aspect" at the Kirkby Gallery, Liverpool and "Seeing Better" at the Coningsby Gallery, London.

Willy Russell continues to be one of the most celebrated and widely produced writers of his generation with works regularly being produced throughout the world as well as in the UK.

2026 is the 40th Anniversary of the World Premier of Shirley Valentine.

willyrussell.com

[X.com/willyrussell](https://x.com/willyrussell)





Norma Sheahan

Norma is a multi-disciplinary artist whose practice covers Playwriting, Theatre, Television, Radio, Cinema, Podcasting & Stand-up. Since graduating from RADA, she has worked on stage, screen & radio for 20 years, including The Abbey, The Royal Court London, RTE, the Gaiety Theatre, & venues all across Ireland.

Her favourite theatre roles were in VAGINA MONOLOGUES, The Gaiety's CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN and SIVE, Enda Walsh's BEDBOUND, for which she won Best Actress, and THE MATCHMAKER. Norma's recent standup comedy show IT'S WINE O'CLOCK WITH NORMA SHEAHAN was a massive hit nationwide.

Her previous sellout Comedy Tour - HEAL YOUR HOLE WITH NORMA SHEAHAN was cut short by covid, but she turned it into a hugely successful Podcast Series of the same name.

Screen work includes Graham Norton's HOLDING, THE YOUNG OFFENDERS, KNEECAP, HARRY WILD, FOUR LETTERS OF LOVE, THE DRY, THE CLINIC, BRIDGET & EAMON, MOONEBOY, DEAD STILL, DAMO & IVOR, RIPPER STREET, NEWBOY, HANDSOME DEVIL, ONDINE, INTERMISSION, A DATE FOR MAD MARY, ETC...

She has enjoyed working with Colin Farrell, Chris O'Dowd, Sharon Horgan, Steve Coogan, Paul Rudd, Jon Kenny, Neil Jordan, Domhnal Gleeson, Jane Seymour, Helena Bonham Carter, Kathy Burke, Kathy Bates, Michael Madsen, Rik Mayell, etc...

Norma has written plays for RTE Radio1 and Bewley's Theatre, and TV sketches for RTE.

Tour dates for SHIRLEY VALENTINE are on

www.NormaSheahan.com

www.normasheahan.com

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/55iiXBPr22RE31pjMnXpBQ?si=AtCYpEGzRNSz9JSI0gv7eA>

Michael Scott

is an independent international theatre director, composer and producer.

Funded by the Arts Council, he received his theatre training in Europe and has been Theatre Director of the Project Arts Centre, Programme Director of Dublin Theatre Festival, Director of the Tivoli Theatre Dublin, RHA Downstairs and SFX City Theatre. Currently Artistic Director of the City Theatre Dublin. His work and music have been seen and heard in Ireland, England, Germany, the USA, Iceland, Wales, Scotland, Italy and France, and on the WWW.

As Author and Director: Plays and adaptations include Dracula, With Christopher Nolan Torchlight And Laser Beams for the Dublin & Edinburgh Theatre Festivals. Dracula (RHA & Tivoli), Brendan Behans' The Hostage (An Giall) with Niall Tobin, Fragments Of Isabella with Gabrielle Reidy for stage and film. Those Three Days (Pro-Cathedral Dublin & Divis-Cathedral-

Belfast) with Stephen Vernon, The Agamemnon (Red Kettle), and The Yellow Man (with Pauline Bewick).

With Eurovision winner Shay Healy, he has written eight children's shows. For Siamsa Tire (The National Folk Theatre) he wrote Songs Of Leaving and Tobar Na Scealta/The Well of Stories and for Duchas Folk Theatre (Trim) Songs By The River.

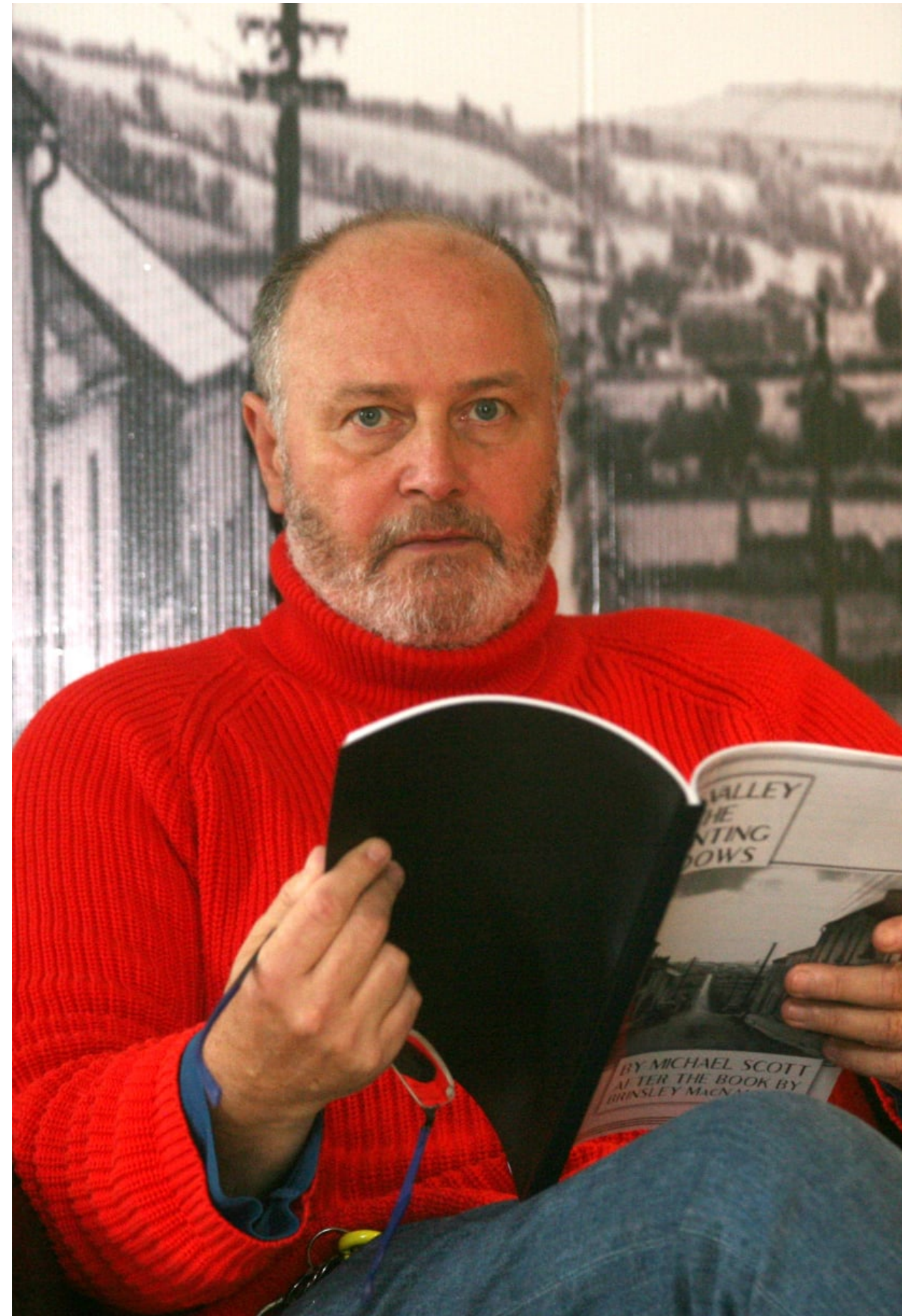
His reinvestigations of the works of W.B. Yeats are celebrated, his production of The Cuchulain Cycle acclaimed both in Dublin and London. He wrote two chamber operas based on plays Purgatory and The Dreaming of the Bones.

In 2019 his play The Valley Of The Squinting Windows was a complete sell out receiving an Irish Times Theatre Nomination, moving after Covid to the Gaiety Theatre, and again selling out totally two years in succession.

Michael Scott also released a number of albums of his original music some new and some archival from previous theatre productions.

His music is available on all digital platforms.

www.michaelscottdublin.ie





Michael McCaffery

Michael McCaffery is a director, designer, writer and broadcaster whose work has been seen in some of the world's greatest theatres.

After working in fringe and repertory theatres in the UK , he became an associate director at the Old Vic in London and joined the directing staff of the National Theatre of Great Britain .

Michael has worked extensively in opera and has directed and designed acclaimed productions for Bayreuth(The Ring) , Glyndebourne, Wexford, Garsington Opera, the National Theatre Tokyo, the Hong Kong Festival, the Israeli Opera, Opera National du Rhin, the Opera Comique Paris ,the Vienna Volksoper and many others.

He was Artistic Director of DGOS Opera Ireland and worked extensively with Michael Scott's Machine and SFX /City Theatre companies as director, designer and dramaturg for more than twenty years. He has taught in many leading conservatoires including RIAM, Trinity College, RADA, GSMAD, the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal Scottish Conservatoire. He was Lecturer in Performance Studies at the University of Manchester and Visiting Professor in Opera at MOMU University of Graz, Austria.

He has written and broadcasted frequently, was nominated for a Sony Award for Best Radio Comedy and has contributed a number of programmes to the BBC, RTE and Lyric FM.

Michael Gilmartin

Mick is a dedicated and enthusiastic backstage crew member who has supported numerous productions with the Mullingar Pantomime Group and Mullingar Student Players.

Recent productions include Hometown, Robin Hood and Phantom of the Opera.

Mick loves both working behind the scenes and attending live theatre and is delighted to be associated with the production of "Shirley Valentine".





Josh Griffin

Trained at Mullingar Centre for the performing Arts and has worked on a number of different productions there.

Josh is a dedicated stage technician with a passion for bringing performances to life behind the scenes. With experience in lighting, sound, stage management, and set construction, Josh has contributed to a wide range of productions at Mullingar Arts Centre, including Phantom of the Opera, Les Mis, Art, And Then There Were None, and Come From Away, where Josh both performed and worked on set construction.

Josh has also worked on a variety of pantomimes, including The Little Mermaid, Alice in Wonderland, and most recently Robin Hood, further broadening experience across different styles of performance.

Josh trained in carpentry at ATU Letterfrack, earning a diploma in Furniture Making and Architectural Woodworking, and has built numerous sets for productions over the years. Josh has also performed in productions, an experience that helps inform a thoughtful and collaborative approach to technical work, blending an understanding of what performers need with the practical demands of backstage production.

Known for a calm presence under pressure and a keen attention to detail, Josh thrives in the fast-paced environment of live theatre. Josh has also worked with Michael Scott previously and enjoys collaborating with him.

City Theatre Dublin (formally The Machine Theatre Company) was founded in 1984 in Dublin.

The Company tours nationally and internationally and develops projects across a number of media, including Theatre, Film, Radio, Digital Media and Live Music.

The Company has been involved in the development of a number of live performance venues in Dublin since its inception, including bringing live performances back to the Ambassador Theatre Dublin (formally the Rotunda Rooms), creating The RHA Downstairs at the RHA Gallery Dublin and SFX CITY THEATRE at the old St. Francis's Xavier Hall in Dublin.

In 1985 the company began to tour some of its productions nationally and internationally to Festivals, Avignon, Edinburgh most notably, and has performed in London, Wales, Scotland, USA and "off Broadway" on several occasions. The Company performs in every county on the island of Ireland, in a variety of venues depending on production size, suitability and technical needs.

Productions include Sisters (Dublin, Edinburgh, Colorado, Off Broadway), The Hostage (Dublin), The Matchmaker (Dublin, Scotland, UK, Off Broadway), The Field (Dublin & National Tour), The Vagina Monologues (Dublin & National Tour), and The Cuchulain Cycle, (Dublin & London) Fragments of Isabella (Dublin, London, Avignon, Cardiff, Berlin), The Valley Of NTHe Squinting Windows (With Mullingar Centre for the Performing Arts)

City Theatre continues to develop and investigate new models of touring and production in all media, providing work, ranging from mainstream audience pullers to boundary pushing community arts participatory theatre and digital media .

www.citytheatredublin.com

Mullingar Centre for The Performing Arts

Mullingar Arts Centre officially opened on 19 November 1998, with its inaugural programme launched in February 1999. Since its establishment, it has played a central role in the cultural life of Westmeath and the wider Midlands, developing a strong reputation as a leading regional venue for the performing arts. Over the past decades, the Centre has evolved into a dynamic and respected institution, rooted in both artistic excellence and community engagement.



Detail of mural By XXx at the Centre

At the heart of the building is its 378-seat theatre, which has hosted a broad and ambitious programme of work. Each year, the venue presents over 150 events spanning theatre, music, dance, comedy, musicals, and theatre-in-education. In line with national arts policy, Mullingar Arts Centre has grown beyond a traditional receiving house, increasingly supporting the development and presentation of original and collaborative work.

Community participation has remained a defining feature of the Centre's history. A comprehensive programme of classes, workshops, and outreach initiatives provides opportunities for people of all ages to engage with the arts. Weekly activities in the centre



across performance, music, and wellbeing disciplines attract over 1,300 participants, while Outreach Education Programmes reach more than 2,000 children, supporting creative learning and artistic exploration.

The Centre is sustained by a dedicated team of staff and experienced facilitators, whose combined expertise underpins its continued success.

Through its longstanding commitment to artistic development and access, Mullingar Arts Centre

has nurtured generations of performers and audiences, and continues to serve as an essential platform for creativity, expression, and cultural connection in the region.

Many past pupils from the Centre's Stage School and Student Players group go into the arts at third level education and continue to work in the performing arts field locally and nationally. The Centre is extremely proud to have been their first artistic platform and learning space.



In 2019 the Centre in association with City Theatre Dublin, presented the world stage premier of THE VALLEY OF THE SQUINTING WINDOWS, which in 2022 and 2023 sold-out performances at Dublin's Gaiety Theatre.

And in 2021 again with City Theatre Dublin the Centre presented Willy Russell's SHIRLEY VALENTINE starring Norma Sheahan at The Gaiety Theatre followed by a national tour. The Centre is delighted to be involved in this revival of that production which marks the 40th anniversary of the premier of the show.

<https://www.mullingarartscentre.ie/>

SHIRLEY VALENTINE

TOUR DATES 2026

16th April 2026 - Mullingar Arts Centre

17th April - Lime Tree Theatre Limerick

18th April - Esker Arts Centre Tullamore

30th April - Siamsa Tire -Tralee

1st May - Watergate Theatre - Kilkenny

2nd May - Cork Opera House

5th/9th May - Gaiety Theatre - Dublin

15th May - Theatre Royal - Waterford

16th May - Swift Center - Trim

21st May -Townhall Theatre -Galway

22nd May -An Grainán - Letterkenny

23rd May - Hawkswell Theatre - Sligo

31st Oct - Roscommon Arts Centre

14th Nov - Backstage Theatre -
Longford